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ABSTRACT

A 1969 cross-sectional sample of adolescent males in the Fort Wayne, Indiana public schools was used to investigate the effect of father absence on educational ambition. Information from surveys completed by the boys and from interviews held with their mothers provided the relevant data. Multiple regression analyses were conducted for four sub-samples which were homogeneous with respect to race and grade level. Because of the greater proportion of female headed families among blacks, father absence proved to be a more important influence in the model for blacks than for whites. Moreover, there was also evidence that father absence depressed ambition to a greater extent among blacks than whites, at least for boys in the 12th grade. Neither academic performance nor the boys' views of the opportunity structure mediated much of the father absence effect on ambition, though a substantial portion of that effect was passed through the mothers' expectations for their sons' ultimate levels of attainment. Research into the nature of peer relationships for blacks and whites, preferably using longitudinal data to chart the development of ambition throughout at least the high school years is suggested. (Author/AM)

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RACE, FATHER ABSENCE, AND THE EDUCATIONAL AMBITION OF ADOLESCENT MALES*

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ABSTRACT

A 1969 cross-sectional sample of adolescent males in the Fort Wayne public schools was used to investigate the effect of father absence on educational ambition. Information from surveys completed by the boys and from interviews held with their mothers provided the relevant data. Multiple regression analyses were conducted for four sub-samples which were homogeneous with respect to race and grade attending; black 9th graders, black 12th graders, white 9th graders and white 12th graders. Father absence was found to have a depressing effect on educational ambition, net of SES and IQ for all four groups of boys. Because of the greater proportion of female-headed families among blacks, father absence proved to be a more important influence in the model for blacks than for whites. Moreover, there was also evidence that father absence depressed ambition to a greater extent among blacks than whites, at least for boys in the 12th grade. Neither academic performance nor the boys' views of the opportunity structure mediated much of the father absence effect on ambition, though a substantial portion of that effect was passed through the mothers' expectations for their sons' ultimate levels of attainment.

Little is known about the effects of father absence on the educational plans or experiences of American youth. Findings from empirical research convey a disjointed impression, yielding nothing approaching a general picture of the impact of father absence in the overall process of educational attainment. Extensive reviews of empirical studies in the area (e.g., Herzog & Sudia; Jackson; Pettigrew) reveal a pronounced tendency for researchers to examine relationships among only limited sets of relevant variables. Many studies even fail to control for SES, an unfortunate practice given the fact that fatherless families are much more likely than intact families to be poor (Chilman & Sussman). Contradictory findings from this research may also be attributed to the use of small samples (Crain & Weisman), to the fact that the samples used in different studies are rarely comparable in terms of their age, sex or race composition (Jackson), and to the fact that many studies fail to distinguish between various types of broken families (e.g., mother-absent, father-absent, surrogate parents, etc.) (Herzog & Sudia).

One study which avoided most of the above difficulties was Blau and Duncan's pioneering analysis of the status attainment process. Adding a family type factor to their "basic model" of occupational attainment (father's education, father's occupation, respondent's education, respondent's first job, and respondent's ultimate occupational attainment), Blau and Duncan performed a multiple classification analysis on data from their all male national sample in order to estimate the effects of a broken home background in the model. Although they found no direct effects on either early or ultimate occupational attainments, the authors

reported that "a background of living in a broken family or with parents with disrupted marriages has some adverse effect on educational attainment, partially because of its association with socioeconomic background factors, but partially for other reasons. . ." (336). Unfortunately, Blau and Duncan were unable to elaborate on these "other reasons" since they did not measure any intervening links between family structure and educational attainment. Though the door was left open for users of the more refined models of later years to explicate this association, no status attainment study since Blau and Duncan has attempted to do so.

This appears to be a significant omission in light of the success of more recent models in explicating the relationships between other aspects of family background (e.g., SES of parental family) and educational attainment. It is quite possible that the same intervening variables that have proven to be of value in mediating the effects of these other family background measures, will prove useful as mediators of the effects of father absence on educational attainment. Since a good deal of the theory on father absence concerns the likely social-psychological ramifications of that experience for an individual (see Boss; Hartnagel; Stryker), the social-psychological model of the educational attainment process developed by Sewell and his associates at the University of Wisconsin (Sewell, Haller & Portes; Sewell, Haller & Ohlendorf; Sewell &Hauser) is of particular interest.

De-emphasizing the notion that family background variables measure aspects of economic resources important for attainment, the Wisconsin scholars theorized that socio-cultural, socio-linguistic and social-psychological factors influence attainment and mediate the family

background-educational attainment relationship. The most commonly used intervening variables in the Wisconsin model are academic performance, influences of significant others (parents, teachers, peers) and educational ambition. Since ambition has been found repeatedly to mediate most of the effects of mental ability, family background and the antecedent intervening variables on educational attainment (Haller & Portes), recent work has attempted to explicate more fully the relationships between it and its antecedents (e.g., Kerckhoff: b).

The present study falls into the latter pattern, in that it attempts to determine the influence of father absence in the process by which adolescent males[1] come to develop expectations regarding their eventual levels of educational attainment. The model to be used is a modified version of the Wisconsin model and has the capacity to integrate conceptual insights from the literature on father absence with the body of theory and research on the process of status attainment. For reasons to be discussed shortly, a primary objective of the present study is to compare the effects of father absence for blacks and whites. Moreover, since the logic which underlies status attainment theorizing is based on a concept of a "socioeconomic life cycle," and since the data to be used are cross-sectional, data relevant to boys at different stages in the educational process (9th and 12th graders) will be examined. The guiding questions in the research reported here were:

1. Does father absence depress educational ambition when parental SES[2] and mental ability are statistically controlled?
2. If that effect occurs, is it transmitted directly or through such intervening variables as academic performance, mother's

expectation or the boy's view of the opportunity structure?

3. Are the effects of father absence different for boys in the 9th and 12th grades?
4. Are characteristics of the mother (i.e., her education and her expectation for her son's education) differentially important for fatherless boys and boys from intact families?
5. Are the answers to questions 1-4 the same for blacks and whites?

Considerations of Race

The Moynihan Report (Moynihan) played a catalytic role in the development of a controversy which to this day permeates discussions of the black family. Citing 1960 census data which showed that 23% of black women who had ever married were divorced or living apart from their husbands (the comparable white figure was 9%),[3] Moynihan argued that the black family was approaching a state of hopeless disintegration. Because he consistently found negative associations between the proportions of fatherless families within predominantly black census tracts and the mean educational level achieved by residents of these tracts, Moynihan concluded that the matrifocal pattern among black families was the cause of these lower levels of attainment. He apparently was unaware that his interpretation might be subject to the ecological fallacy. In fact, Moynihan went even further beyond the limits of his data when he contended that "White boys without fathers at least perceive all about them the pattern of men working. Negro boys without fathers flounder -- and fail" (35). Since the above is a statement about race differences in the effects of father absence on individuals, it cannot

be supported by aggregate data.

Understandably, a large number of critical reactions followed the publication of the Moynihan Report (e.g., Billingsley: a,b; Duberman; Rainwater & Yancey; Reissman; Staples). While most of these critiques accurately point out flaws in Moynihan's methods, none of them has contributed much to our knowledge of the effects of father absence on the education of blacks or whites. For example, Moynihan's contention that individual blacks suffer more adverse educationally relevant consequences as a result of being fatherless, than do individual whites, remains empirically unchallenged. This is surprising, given the position generally taken in these critiques that the widespread matricentric pattern among blacks, instead of indicating pathology, represents a healthy adaptation to two centuries of prejudicial treatment in a discriminatory social structure. (For a more complete elucidation of this perspective see especially Guttman; Stack). If the mother-centered pattern is truly a functional alternative for blacks, it seems likely that, contrary to Moynihan's argument, father absence would have <u>less</u> detrimental effects on the education of blacks than on the education of whites. That is, the differential in the attainments of children from broken and intact families may be smaller among blacks than among whites.

Since the dependent variable in the present study is not educational attainment, but rather educational ambition, the data to be used cannot directly address this issue. Nonetheless, ambition has been found to be an important factor in the educational attainment process for both blacks and whites (Kerckhoff and Campbell: a), and race comparisons of the effects of father absence on ambition may help clarify ambiguities

in previous research. For example, the fact that levels of educational and occupational ambition of blacks and whites have been found to be very similar (Coleman et al.; Proshansky & Newton; Rosenberg & Simmons) has been incorrectly interpreted as evidence that disproves Moynihan's thesis concerning the adverse consequences associated with being fatherless among blacks. Berger and Simon reasoned that since female headed families are more prevalent among blacks, equal levels of ambition for blacks and whites must indicate that the fatherless family is performing its function of preparing children for entry into the educational and occupational spheres equally as well as the intact family. Clearly, this is too facile an inference.

Though the within-race means provide valuable information about the central tendencies of the black and white amibition distributions, they tell nothing about either the shapes of those distributions or about race differences in the variance which ambition shares with other variables. Even if equal means on ambition are observed for blacks and whites, it is still quite possible for father absence to have a greater negative effect on the ambition of blacks than on the ambition of whites. Using multiple regression techniques, the present study provides a long-needed comparison of the size of these effects.

Race and Status Attainment

Previous studies which have compared coefficients from black and white models of ambition and attainment (Carter et al.; Hout & Morgan; Porter) consistently have found black models to have less power than the corresponding models for whites. Although this has been viewed as

evidence that contemporary American stratification theory is predicated on a notion of white normative consensus (Grigsby), recent work shows promise of identifying key variables in the attainment process for blacks. Of particular interest is research on locus of control in the motivational dynamics of black youth (see Coleman et al.; Crandall et al.; Kerckhoff & Campbell:b). The Rotter scale and similar measures of perceptions of environmental control repeatedly have been found to be more powerful predictors of academic performance, ambition and achievement for blacks than they have for whites. Nonetheless, this is not the only reason for including such a variable in the present analysis.

Locus of control measures locate a person at some point along an internal-external dimension, according to that individual's espoused view of the opportunity structure. Those individuals who believe that success is based primarily on personal initiative and hard work are placed near the internal pole of the dimension, while those who think that success is based primarily on luck or on the caprices of a few powerful individuals are considered externally oriented. Externality (fatalism) is usually associated with lower levels of ambition and with less success in the educational system. Since it seems reasonable to expect that loss of a father may be a traumatic experience that clearly demonstrates to the child the existence of powers beyond his control, the locus of control variable may prove to be an important intervening link between family structure and educational ambition. It is hypothesized that father absence will result in a more fatalistic view of the opportunity structure which in turn should result in lower ambition.

Another variable that should contribute differentially to black

and white models of ambition is father absence. Given what we know about race differences in the prevalence of female headed families, it seems probable that father absence will lend more power to the black model. Of course it is possible that the consequences associated with being fatherless for the average white are much more deleterious than those for the average black, in which case the above hypothesis could be disaffirmed.

One final, somewhat more speculative expectation can be articulated. It is generally thought that as children pass through the educational system, they gradually acquire a better understanding of the society's occupational structure (especially the link between level of education and prestige of occupation) and in addition, increasingly come to evaluate their own chances of success with reference to their social origins, mental ability (presumably made known to them in the form of grades) and the evaluations of significant others in their environment. Although the age related tendency to develop more "meaningful" ambitions is thought to be ubiquitous, there is reason to believe that blacks and whites begin to demonstrate this tendency at different points in the life cycle. Evidence to support this view comes from attempts to explain the ambitions of blacks and whites at different stages of the life cycle. For example, Kerckhoff (a) found the parameters of an ambition model to be much more comparable across race for 12th graders than for 9th graders, and more comparable for 9th graders than for 6th graders. The implications of this finding for black-white comparisons of the effects of father absence are clear. To the extent that the ambitions of young boys are randomly determined, the effect of father absence on their eventual level of ambition will be underestimated. Hence,

it is expected that the father absence effect will be stronger for 12th graders than for 9th graders and somewhat stronger for 9th grade whites than for 9th grade blacks.

DATA

The data used in this study were obtained in 1969 from school records and a survey of Fort Wayne, Indiana male students and their mothers.[4] Although other data were collected, the present analysis is restricted to an examination of data relevant to 9th and 12th graders for whom mothers' interviews are available.

For each cohort of boys, the school was the primary sampling unit; all boys in the specified grade within a chosen school were designated for the survey. Since the data set was originally designed to provide for meaningful race comparisons, and since the total number of black 12th graders registered in Fort Wayne public schools was only 88, all five of the city's high schools were chosen. The situation with 9th graders was quite different, since a much greater proportion of black children are still enrolled in school at that point in their lives. Five of the city's thirteen junior high schools were chosen in such a way as to oversample blacks.

The initial sampling strategy called for interviews with parents of approximately 100 boys from each grade-race cohort. Since this was impossible as far as 12th grade blacks were concerned, an effort was made to interview the parents of all these boys. The completion rates for each grade-race cohort are reported in Table 1. A more detailed description of the data set and sampling strategy is provided by

Kerckhoff (a).

--- Table 1 about here ---

Research Design and Variable Measurement

The analysis is carried out within the framework of a flow of influence model (see Figure 1) and treats hypothesized causal relationships among 7 variables. These variables were measured as follows:

Level of Educational Ambition (Edamb) is the respondent's answer to the question: "How much more schooling do you really expect to get?"[5] Responses were given by choosing one answer from a six-item ordinal scale ranging from (1) "I'll quit high school before graduating" to (6) "I'll go to graduate or professional school after college."

View of the Opportunity Structure (Control) is an index of six Lickert scale items that assess the boy's perception of the availability of opportunities for goal attainment. If two or fewer of the component items had missing values, an average of the scores on the remaining items was used. Sample items are "People like me don't have much of a chance to be successful in life," and "With things as they are today, the wise person ought to think about the present without worrying about what is going to happen tomorrow." Items were drawn from two clusters of questions located in different sections of the questionnaire. Tests of inter-item reliability gave no reason to believe that the measure is differentially reliable across the four grade-race cohorts to any significant degree.[6] Scores on the overall index range from 1 to 4 with lower scores indicating a more external (fatalistic) orientation.

Mother's Expectation for Her Son's Educational Attainment (Moexp), taken from the mother's interview, is based on her response to the question: "Which category on this card shows how much schooling you really expect (name) to get?" The six categories on the card ranged from (1) "quit high school before graduating" to (6) "get a graduate or professional degree after attending a four year college."

Academic Performance (GPA) is the boy's grade point average as it appeared in the Fort Wayne school records. It is measured on a 100 point scale and is based on the two years prior to the survey.[7]

Mental Ability is measured by IQ scores retrieved from the school records.

Mother's Education (Moed) is reported by the mother. A six item scale similar to those used in Moexp and Edamb is used here.

Family Type (FaAbs, Surog, Other) is the variable of principle interest in the present study. Table 2 presents a categorization of family types with associated absolute and relative frequencies for each of the grade-race cohorts. Several items of information from both mother's interviews and boy's questionnaires were combined to establish the categories. Boys with father surrogates received scores of 1 on the Surog dummy, while FaAbs was scored 1 for all boys falling into the father absent category and 0 for all others. Inconsistent persons are those for whom data from the several sources of information on family type are contradictory. These cases as well as those falling into the categories of mother absent, mother surrogate and both surrogates were scored 1 on the Other dichotomy, thus representing all other categories except intact

families. The reduced sample N for 12th grade blacks in Table 2 reflects the loss of 2 cases due to missing data on the dependent variable.[8]

--- Table 2 about here ---

As shown in Figure 1, ability, mother's education and family type are taken as given and represent the origin characteristics of the boy. The curved two-headed arrow linking them indicates that, while they will be controlled, the relationships among them will remain unanalyzed. The next stage of the model includes view of the opportunity structure, mother's expectation and academic performance. These are seen as affected by the exogenous variables and as affecting the boy's educational ambition. The latter, of course, is seen as affected by all prior variables in the system.[9] When the variables are expressed in standardized form, the structural equations may be written as

$$G = p_{GI}I + p_{GB}B + p_{GF}F + p_{GS}S + p_{GO}O + p_{G_1}e_1$$

$$C = p_{CI}I + p_{CB}B + p_{CF}F + p_{CS}S + p_{CO}O + p_{C_s}e_2$$

$$M = p_{MI}I + p_{MB}B + p_{MF}F + p_{MS}S + p_{MO}O + p_{M_3}e_3$$

$$E = p_{EI}I + p_{EB}B + p_{EF}F + p_{ES}S + p_{EO}O + p_{EG}G + p_{EC}C + p_{EM}M + p_{E_4}e_4$$

--- Figure 1 about here ---

ANALYSIS

The means and standard deviations of all model variables, along with their intercorrelations, are reported in Table 3. With the exceptions of Moed and Control, none of the differences in means between 9th and 12th grade whites is significant. However, for blacks, significant

cohort differences in means are observed for GPA, Control, Moexp, and Edamb. Other differences are sizable and also in a direction consistent with a selective dropout phenomenon. The substantially smaller proportion of fatherless boys among the older blacks suggests that black female-headed families send a disproportionate share of their male offspring into the adult world without the benefit of a high school education.

--- Table 3 about here ---

Do the Effects of Mother's Education and Mother's Expectation Differ for Father-Absent and Father-Present Boys?

Since the presence of statistical interaction effects would undermine the validity of the analysis of covariance assumption of parallel regression surfaces between groups (see Cohen and Cohen) and thereby make inappropriate the system of structural equations presented in the preceding section, the answer to this question was sought first. The product terms (FaAbs · Moed) and (FaAbs · Moexp) were entered into hierarchical regression equations at appropriate stages of the model. Specifically, this entailed entering (FaAbs · Moed) in a second step in the equations for GPA, Control and Moexp, and in a step following the entry of the exogeneous variables, but prior to the entry of the intervening variables in the Edamb equation. (FaAbs · Moexp) was entered in a final step in the Edamb equation. F tests for increment to R^2 revealed no significant contribution to the explanation of any criterion variable involving either product term alone or both in combination for any of the grade-race cohorts. Thus, mother's education and mother's

expectation appear to be of roughly equal importance in the process of ambition formation for boys from broken and intact families, and we may proceed to use the simple model described earlier to answer the remaining questions.

Since two of the remaining four questions involve possible differences in the effects of father absence on blacks and whites and on boys in the 9th and 12th grades, comparisons of these effects across the four groups will be made throughout the remainder of the analysis. Because the small number of boys with surrogate fathers among both cohorts of whites and among black 12th graders makes reliable estimation of Surog effects for those groups unlikely, full comparisons of the effects of having a surrogate father cannot be made. Moreover, since Other represents a residual category composed of several types of families in varying proportions across grade-race cohorts, it makes little sense to systematically compare these coefficients.

Does Father Absence Depress Ambition Even When the Effects of Ability and Mother's Education are Partialled Out?

In order to answer this question, let us turn to Table 4 which reports both standardized and metric coefficients derived from reduced form (see Alwin & Hauser) ambition equations for each grade-race cohort. Both a simple equation in which IQ and Moed are the only predictors, and a more complete equation which includes these as well as the family type variables are presented. Though the conceptualization of the flow of influence that guides the analysis includes the family type variables in the same stage of the model as IQ and Moed, they are placed in a second

step here to facilitate a straightforward interpretation of their contribution to the various within group equations.

--- Table 4 about here ---

Comparing equation (1) across the four groups, one is immediately struck by the substantial differences in R^2. In confirmation of previous research (see Kerckhoff: a), the ambitions of blacks are explained less fully than those of whites. Among whites, the ambitions of older boys are explained less fully than those of younger boys, though the reverse is true for blacks. Black 9th graders, in particular, apparently perceive little connection between their own social background and ability and their likelihood to pursue higher education.

Although the addition of the family type variables in equation (2) produced a significant increment to R^2 only for black 12th graders, father absence depresses ambition among all four groups of boys.[10] The standardized coefficients reveal that FaAbs is the most powerful variable in the equation up to this point for blacks, whereas among whites its influence on the aggregate level of ambition is minimal. Nonetheless, a comparison of metric coefficients (interpreted as the difference in mean level of ambition between fatherless boys and boys from intact families, when all other variables are held constant) shows that among 9th graders the difference in average level of ambition between fatherless whites and whites from intact families is actually greater than that between fatherless and father present blacks. Before leaping to conclusions, however, a comparison of FaAbs' effects on 12th grade blacks and whites (for whom the ambition measure is thought to be more meaningful)

should be made.

Among 12th graders, the father present-father absent differential in ambition is nearly twice as large for blacks as it is for whites. Partly this is due to a reduction in the size of the FaAbs effect for 12th grade (compared with 9th grade) whites, but it is also due to a substantially larger FaAbs effect for older blacks. Since differential school dropouts by race would be more likely to bias the race difference downward, the older the boys that are compared, these findings seem robust and invite replication.

Explication of the Father Absence-Ambition Relationship

Table 5 reports metric regression coefficients and associated standard errors (in parentheses) for the full set of model equations for each grade-race cohort. The table breaks down the effect of each antecedent variable on ambition into direct and indirect components and, in addition, shows how the indirect effects are transmitted (i.e., via which intervening variables in the equation). The complexity of these data prohibits a full discussion of the effects of all model variables, though the observed coefficients are about what one would expect, given the findings of previous research.[11]

--- Table 5 about here ---

Turning first to the educational ambition equation, one finds that for every group except white 12th graders, most of the father absence effect is left unmediated. The proportions of the total FaAbs effect passed through the entire set of intervening variables are 23.0%

for black 9th graders, 27.8% for white 9th graders, 35.5% for black 12th graders, and 56.3% for white 12th graders. The pattern of increased mediation of the FaAbs effect among older boys of both races is due primarily to the heightened influence of MoExp in the ambition equation for these older boys.

The present data confirm expectations derived from previous studies that have suggested that loss of a husband has a deleterious impact on aspects of the mother-son relationship (see generally Glasser & Navarre; Grambs; Pettigrew; Powdermaker). A comparison of FaAbs coefficients in the MoExp equation reveals that among all four grade-race cohorts, mothers of fatherless boys had lower expectations for their sons' attainments than did mothers from intact families. While the father present-father absent differential in mothers' expectations is about the same for whites in both grades, it is much larger for blacks in the 12th grade than for those in the 9th grade.

The hypothesis that the boy's view of the opportunity structure is an important intervening factor in the process by which family structure comes to affect the boy's ultimate level of ambition receives only limited support from the present data. Some of the findings are perplexing and seem to defy interpretation. For example, father absence fails to make a difference in the views of the opportunity structure of 9th grade youth of either race, though FaAbs shows substantial effects on 12th graders that differ in direction across race. Whereas father absence results in a more external locus of control among blacks (as was predicted), it results in a more internal orientation among whites. Though it is enticing to dismiss this finding as a result of a peculiarity

in the sample, the magnitude of the white 12th grade coefficient (largest of any observed) combined with the fact that the other exogeneous variables relate to Control in the expected direction for these boys, makes one wary of doing so. Nonetheless, as expected, it is only among blacks that Control makes a significant difference in the formulation of the boys' educational ambition, and the effect of FaAbs on 12th grade blacks' views of the opportunity structure is such that it ultimately results in lowered levels of educational ambition.

The present data show the boy's grades to be somewhat less important in the development of ambition than do previous studies (cf. Kerckhoff: a,b), and as a result, GPA is not as powerful an intervening link between FaAbs and EdAmb as was anticipated. GPA's role as a mediator of the FaAbs effect is most pronounced among black 9th graders for whom it indirectly passes about 12% of the total father absence effect. In any case, father absence depresses academic performance levels among boys in all four grade-race cohorts, as expected. The family type differential in grades is nearly two points on the GPA scale for blacks in both 9th and 12th grades, while for whites in both cohorts, it is considerably less than one point.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present analysis require further comment. Since our control on socioeconomic background utilizes only information about mother's education, it is conceivable that the observed influence of father absence is due entirely to income differences between broken and intact families. Some critics might point to the miniscule Surog

effect on EdAmb for black 9th graders (the only group with a reasonably large number of cases in the father-surrogate category) as evidence that family income is actually what caused the observed outcome. However, there are at least four reasons to doubt that such is the case. First there are sound reasons to expect boys with surrogate fathers to have higher levels of ambition than fatherless boys that have nothing to do with income (see Cavan:519). The presence of a substitute male role model and alleviation of a divorced mother's feelings of resentment and hostility toward males (including her son) (see Grambs) are two examples. Second, though the mother's education measure is clearly sub-optimal as an indicator of SES, it seems likely that that measure and a measure of family income would correlate in the vicinity of .4, at least. Third, the IQ variable is likely to share some variance with a measure of family income residualized on mother's education, thus removing even more of the shared variance with income from FaAbs. Fourth, and most importantly, the Surog coefficients observed among white 9th graders and among black 12th graders, as well as most of the coefficients associated with the Other dichotomy (which represents various categories of boys whose families should be better off financially than female-headed families)[12] are larger and in the same direction as those associated with FaAbs.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Father absence has been shown to depress educational ambition for both black and white males in two different grades. Its effect is substantial even in the presence of controls for SES and IQ.

Since broken homes are more prevalent among blacks, it is no surprise that father absence contributes more explanatory power to the black model. However, there is also evidence that black individuals suffer more deleterious consequences as a result of father absence than do white individuals. Though the present data show the ambitions of white 9th graders to be affected somewhat more by FaAbs than the ambitions of 9th grade blacks, this seems to be due primarily to the random nature of the younger blacks' expectations. Among those enrolled in school in the 12th grade, the differential in levels of ambition for fatherless boys and boys from intact families is almost twice as large for blacks as for whites.

Efforts to explicate the father absence-ambition relationship met with mixed results. GPA did little to mediate the FaAbs effect, though fatherless boys had lower grades than boys from intact families among all four grade-race cohorts. Race differences in the direction of FaAbs effect on Control made the findings concerning locus of control somewhat enigmatic. Only the mother's expectation variable proved to be an important mediator of the father absence effect on educational ambition. Among all but black 9th graders, the portion of the FaAbs effect on EdAmb that was passed through MoExp exceeded two-thirds of the entire indirect effect of father absence.

The fact that MoExp was the only significant others influence (SOI) variable used in the present model makes one curious about the likely behavior of other SOI variables in similar models. Perhaps peer influences, for example, could partly explain the observed race differences in the pattern of FaAbs effects across grade cohorts.

Rosenberg and Simmons (21-30) have noted a wide-spread phenomenon of "homophily" (the tendency to choose as friends individuals of the same race and with similar background experiences) in adolescent friendship networks. Given this pattern, the very fact that female-headed families are so prevalent among blacks may contribute to a growing incongruity over time in the effect of father absence on the ambition of individual blacks and whites. Since a fatherless white boy would be much less likely than a fatherless black boy to have friends who were also fatherless (and presumably also have low levels of ambition), father absence should have a greater relationship with the ambitions of a boy's friends among blacks than among whites. Through interaction with friends from intact families, the fatherless white may come gradually to see himself as not very different from them, and as a result raise his expectations for his own education to be more in accordance with theirs. The black fatherless boy, on the other hand, through interactions with others like him, may receive only further corroboration of an already relatively poor academic self-image.

One thing is certain. Research into the nature of peer relationships for blacks and whites, preferably using longitudinal data to chart the development of ambition throughout at least the high school years, is necessary. There are a number of other directions that seem promising for future research. Using larger samples, further discrimination between family types would be possible, thus permitting systematic comparisons of the attainment process for youngsters with varying family background experiences. Second, male-female comparisons would add significantly to the predominantly speculative literature on sex differences

in the effects of father absence. Third, if the present findings regarding locus of control are replicated, distinct possibilities for creative theorizing and imaginative empirical research would arise. It would be necessary to determine if father absence has different social-psychological ramifications for black and white youth, whether internal-external dimensions actually have different meanings for blacks and whites, or whether only particular measures of locus of control are differentially valid across race.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Most status attainment studies have dealt only with males. Although this may be viewed as an unfortunate general trend, there are sound reasons for studying only males in the present paper. First, it is widely held that father absence has more profound effects on the development of male children than on the development of female children (see Cavan). Second, since the present investigation is an exploratory one, we seek to relate our results to those of previous studies.

[2]In the present study, SES is indexed solely by mother's education. Although father's education and occupation are normally used in status attainment models, they are of little value when the topic of the investigation concerns absence of the father. Moreover, use of mother's occupation was prohibited by the high proportion of non-working mothers. This alteration may tend to increase the power of the black model relative to the white. In a recent paper, Kerckhoff and Campbell (b) showed that when mother's education was substituted for father's SES (education and occupation), the explanatory power of the SES index dropped sharply for high SES whites, remained essentially unchanged for low SES whites, but increased greatly for blacks.

[3]Perhaps the least disputed finding in studies of father absence is the racial differential in proportion of fatherless families. More recent data lend credibility to Moynihan's estimates and suggest that the differential is increasing (U.S. Bureau of the Census). A recent nationally representative survey of children aged 7 to 11 found that more than one-quarter of all children studied and more than half the black children

did not live with their biological fathers (Foundation for Child Development).

[4]Much previous work with the Wisconsin model has been flawed in that significant others' influences are measured by questions asked of the individual they are supposed to affect. This is a questionable practice since there is considerable evidence that children are poor reporters of their parents' goals for them (Kandell & Lesser; Kerckhoff & Huff). In general, there appears to be a tendency for some sort of cognitive consistency phenomenon to occur, wherein the child reports parental goals more closely related to his own goals than are the parental goals reported by the parents themselves. Hence, a consequence of this practice is an inflation of the observed power of the model. Since mother's influences play a critical role in the conceptualization of the present model, a decision was made to obtain data on mother's characteristics (her own education and her expectations for her son's educational attainment) from the mother herself.

[5]Parallel analyses were performed substituting educational aspirations for educational expectations as the index of ambition. Though the results are not reported here, essentially they mirror those obtained with the expectations measure.

[6]Cronbach's alpha ranged from a low of approximately .60 to a high of approximately .69 across the four groups.

[7]The time of measurement of GPA causes a problem with its ordering vis a vis the family type variables. Since the latter are based on the family structure at the time of the survey, there is a possibility that

the father could have left the household after the relevant GPA score was recorded. However, internal checks using retrospective measures in the data ("Did you live with both parents when you were in the first grade?") reveal little cause for such concern. By making certain assumptions about which parent was missing (e.g., if the father was missing in 1969 and the boy reports not living with both parents "three years ago," it is assumed that the father has been missing at least three years), we find that approximately 82% of the fatherless youth have suffered from long-term father absence (three years or more). Of the remaining 18%, an unknown proportion may have been missing fathers for at least two years. At any rate, tests for differences between GPA means of long vs. short term fatherless boys revealed no significant differences.

[8]Although data were missing in small proportions (from 1% to 8%) from all model variables, they appeared to be missing randomly. Because of this, listwise deletion reduced the number of cases beyond a tolerable level. The solution adopted in the present analysis was to drop cases missing data on the dependent variable, while estimating valid scores for missing values on independent variables. The value assigned to a missing case was the mean on the variable of interest for the grade-race cohort in which the missing case resided. This procedure has been shown to result in a conservative estimate of the levels of association among variables in a model (see Hertel).

[9]Although several studies have specified a more complex ordering among some of these variables (e.g., Kerckhoff: b), the simple model used here should suffice in light of the exploratory nature of the present

investigation. If significant father absence effects are found, future analyses may wish to use more complex designs, including non-recursive models.

[10]Conventional significance testing procedures are deemed inappropriate in the present analysis for two reasons. First, such procedures are of little value in the comparison of FaAbs' effects across grade-race cohorts since the level of significance of a coefficient for a dichotomous variable depends in large part on the number of cases in each of the two categories of the variable. Given the race difference in the prevalence of female-headed families, tests for the significance of FaAbs coefficients for whites are much less sensitive than those for blacks. Second, the stratification of the sample into four relatively homogeneous sub-samples reduces the power of the significance tests performed within each of these sub-samples. Though tests could be performed on the entire sample by using the standard analysis of covariance equation in which multiplicative terms (involving race and cohort in addition to the main effects) are computed, it is thought that such a technique obscures important patterns in the data that are more readily ascertained within the present analytic framework.

[11]Two rather striking exceptions involve the effects of mother's education. Among black 9th graders, Moed has negative effects on GPA and EdAmb. This is clearly at odds with previous findings and with the findings of the present study regarding these boys' white peers and the older white and black youngsters. Nonetheless, since the effects are non-significant, it is conceivable that they are the result of the different

strategies of selection used in the sampling of 9th and 12th grade boys. Among black 12th graders, mothers' education has a substantial negative effect on mother's expectation. Perhaps the less educated mothers of these boys are overly encouraged by the fact that their sons have made it that far in school, and accordingly raise their expectations to unrealistically high levels whereas more educated black mothers probably have a better understanding of the inherently discriminatory nature of the system and this may become reflected in more realistic (i.e. lower) expectations. The present analysis does not permit further examination of this problem and thus, validation or invalidation of the foregoing reasoning must await future research.

[12]First, two of the categories represented by the Other dichotomy--mother surrogate and both surrogates--are two-parent families and thus should be better off financially than one-parent families. Second, since working males generally earn more money than working females, mother absent families also should generate more income than father absent families. Third, the inconsistent category identifies boys for whom there is some doubt about family structure. It seems likely that at least some of these boys come from two-parent families.

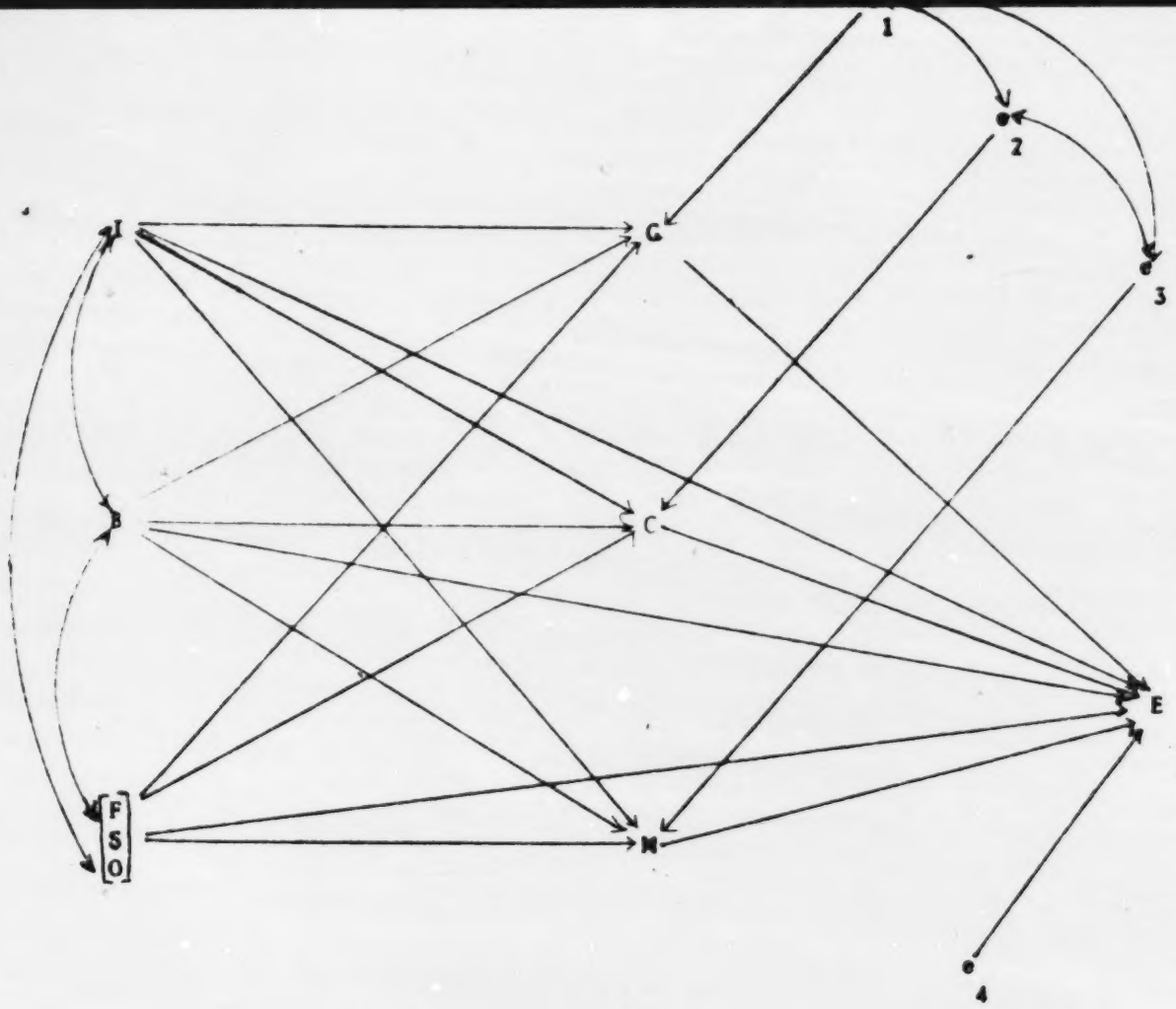

FIGURE 1
A Modified "Wisconsin Model" of Educational Ambition

KEY

I=mental Ability
B=mother's education
F=father absence
S=father surrogate
O=other non-intact family type
G=grade point average
C=view of the opportunity structure
M=mother's expectation
E=educational ambition

TABLE 1

Characteristics of the 9th and 12th Grade

Mother's Interview Samples

	WHITE		BLACK	
	9th	12th	9th	12th
Interview held with Mother	102	102	95	52
Unable to Locate or Contact	6	10	14	8
Refusal	19	26	8	7
Proportion Completed of those Attempted	80.3%	73.9%	81.2%	77.6%

TABLE 2

Family Type Frequencies by Race and Cohort

	WHITE 9th	WHITE 12th	BLACK 9th	BLACK 12th
BOTH BIOLOGICAL PARENTS	84	84	35	28
BOTH SURROGATES	0	0	3	3
FATHER ABSENT	6	10	29	12
MOTHER ABSENT	4	4	3	0
MOTHER SURROGATE	1	1	3	0
FATHER SURROGATE	3	3	14	2
INCONSISTENT	4	1	8	7
TOTAL	102	102	95	52
REDUCED SAMPLE N	102	102	95	50

TABLE 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations

WHITE 9th GRADERS

	IQ	MoEd	FaAbs	Surog	Other	GPA	Control	MoExp	EdAmb	MEAN	STD.DEV
IQ	1.0	.295	-.212	-.068	-.028	.693	.440	.542	.516	110.949	12.755
MoEd		1.0	-.111	-.161	-.133	.411	.320	.452	.468	2.615	1.396
FaAbs			1.0	-.043	-.057	-.166	-.073	-.207	-.242	.059	.236
Surog				1.0	-.039	-.184	-.181	-.229	-.189	.029	.170
Other					1.0	-.037	.052	-.088	-.192	.049	.217
GPA						1.0	.358	.623	.540	83.958	5.990
Control							1.0	.448	.395	2.890	.485
MoExp								1.0	.680	4.134	1.376
EdAmb									1.0	3.167	1.386

BLACK 9th GRADERS

	IQ	MoEd	FaAbs	Surog	Other	GPA	Control	MoExp	EdAmb	MEAN	STD.DE
IQ	1.0	.092	-.106	.011	-.196	.434	.240	.346	.075	91.825	11.219
MoEd		1.0	-.083	.024	-.105	-.056	.162	.072	-.025	1.389	.695
FaAbs			1.0	-.276	-.276	-.156	-.132	-.175	-.174	.305	.463
Surog				1.0	-.173	-.067	-.017	.044	.074	.147	.356
Other					1.0	-.107	.123	-.017	-.063	.147	.356
GPA						1.0	.122	.318	.183	75.783	4.544
Control							1.0	.171	.243	2.483	.504
MoExp								1.0	.162	3.344	1.481
EdAmb									1.0	2.410	.309

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations

WHITE 12th GRADERS

	IQ	MoEd	FaAbs	Surog	Other	GPA	Control	MoExp	EdAmb	MEAN	STD.DEV
IQ	1.0	.338	-.192	.070	-.120	.551	.185	.498	.462	110.928	12.319
MoEd		1.0	-.066	-.094	.103	.260	.080	.321	.264	2.216	1.083
FaAbs			1.0	-.047	-.047	-.134	.172	-.217	-.199	.098	.299
Surog				1.0	-.020	-.053	-.053	-.021	-.011	.020	.139
Other					1.0	-.064	.000	-.021	-.117	.020	.139
GPA						1.0	.537	.660	.673	82.941	6.531
Control							1.0	.397	.392	3.082	.446
MoExp								1.0	.814	4.206	1.385
EdAmb									1.0	3.108	1.342

BLACK 12th GRADERS

	IQ	MoEd	FaAbs	Surog	Other	GPA	Control	MoExp	EdAmb	MEAN	STD.DEV
IQ	1.0	.033	-.093	.200	-.305	.393	.237	-.075	.192	93.741	11.390
MoEd		1.0	.241	-.094	-.068	.112	.133	-.325	.154	1.388	.853
FaAbs			1.0	-.115	-.263	-.172	-.120	-.294	-.187	.240	.431
Surog				1.0	-.096	-.113	-.187	-.342	-.320	.040	.198
Other					1.0	-.200	-.266	-.023	-.362	.180	.389
GPA						1.0	.247	.169	.301	78.871	3.426
Control							1.0	.245	.447	2.847	.474
MoExp								1.0	.398	3.939	1.168
EdAmb									1.0	2.300	1.161

TABLE 4

Reduced Form Ambition Equations

9th GRADERS

	R^2	Increment to R^2	Race	IQ	MoEd	FaAbs	Surog	Other
(1)	.375*	---	WHITE	.045* (.414)	.343* (.346)			
	.007	---	BLACK	.009 (.078)	-.061 (-.032)			
(2)	.426*	.051	WHITE	.042* (.385)	.295* (.297)	-.828 (-.141)	-1.042 (-.128)	-.988 (-.155)
	.048	.041	BLACK	.004 (.035)	-.110 (-.058)	-.591 (-.209)	-.012 (-.003)	-.441 (-.120)

12th GRADERS

	R^2	Increment to R^2	Race	IQ	MoEd	FaAbs	Surog	Other
(1)	.226*	---	WHITE	.046* (.421)	.151 (.122)			
	.059	---	BLACK	.019 (.187)	.202 (.148)			
(2)	.248*	.022	WHITE	.042* (.385)	.163 (.132)	-.551 (-.123)	-.323 (-.034)	-.876 (-.091)
	.386*	.327*	BLACK	.011 (.105)	.238 (.175)	-1.016* (-.378)	-2.392* (-.408)	-1.258* (-.421)

* coefficient significant at .05 level

TABLE 5

Metric Regression Coefficients for All Model Equations
Standard Errors in Parentheses

DEPENDENT	PREDETERMINED	WHITE 9th GRADERS TOTAL	DIRECT	INDIRECT EFFECTS VIA: GPA	Control	MoExp
GPA R^2 = .538* intercept=49.417	IQ	.291* (.035)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.900* (.319)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.395 (1.810)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-3.828 (2.491)	---	---	---	---
	Other	.090 (1.941)	---	---	---	---
Control R^2 = .257* intercept=1.093	IQ	.014* (.004)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.071* (.033)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	.063 (.186)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-.335 (.256)	---	---	---	---
	Other	.193 (.199)	---	---	---	---
MoExp R^2 = .420* intercept=-1.608	IQ	.046* (.009)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.280* (.082)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.553 (.466)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-1.301* (.641)	---	---	---	---
	Other	-.321 (.500)	---	---	---	---
EdExp R^2 = .550* intercept=-1.349	IQ	.042* (.009)	.015 (.011)	.004	.002	.020
	MoEd	.295* (.082)	.150+ (.080)	.013	.013	.119
	FaAbs	-.829+ (.467)	-.598 (.424)	-.005	.011	-.236
	Surog	-1.042 (.643)	-.371 (.596)	-.054	-.061	-.554
	Other	-.988+ (.501)	-.888+ (.456)	.001	.035	-.137
	GPA	.014 (.025)	---	---	---	---
	Control	.181 (.236)	---	---	---	---
	MoExp	.426* (.099)	---	---	---	---

* coefficient significant at .05 level
\+ coefficient at least 1.75 times std.error

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Metric Regression Coefficients for All Model Equations
Standard Errors in Parentheses

WHITE 12th GRADERS

DEPENDENT	PREDETERMINED	TOTAL	DIRECT	INDIRECT EFFECTS VIA: GPA	Control	MoExp
GPA R^2 = .317* intercept=51.299	IQ	.278* (.049)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.443 (.551)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.724 (1.883)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-3.969 (3.996)	---	---	---	---
	Other	-.551 (4.039)	---	---	---	---
Control R^2 = .08 intercept=2.113	IQ	.008* (.004)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.003 (.044)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	.322* (.149)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-.184 (.316)	---	---	---	---
	Other	.117 (.319)	---	---	---	---
MoExp R^2 = .291* intercept=-1.454	IQ	.047* (.011)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.212+ (.119)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.587 (.407)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-.406 (.864)	---	---	---	---
	Other	.057 (.873)	---	---	---	---
EdExp R^2 = .710* intercept=-2.864	IQ	.042* (.011)	-.002 (.008)	.013	.002	.028
	MoEd	.163 (.119)	.014 (.076)	.021	.001	.128
	FaAbs	-.351 (.406)	-.241 (.271)	-.034	.078	-.354
	Surog	-.323 (.861)	.152 (.547)	-.186	-.044	-.245
	Other	-.876 (.871)	-.913 (.550)	-.026	.028	.034
	GPA	.047* (.016)	---	---	---	---
	Control	.242 (.193)	---	---	---	---
	MoExp	.603* (.079)	---	---	---	---

* coefficient significant at .05 level
+coefficient at least 1.75 times std. error

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Metric Regression Coefficients for All Model Equations
Standard Errors in Parentheses

BLACK 9th GRADERS

DEPENDENT	PREDETERMINED	TOTAL	DIRECT	INDIRECT EFFECTS VIA: GPA	Control	MoExp
GPA R^2 = .234* intercept=62.951	IQ	.163* (.039)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	-.773 (.615)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-1.910+ (1.033)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-1.823 (1.283)	---	---	---	---
	Other	-1.511 (1.330)	---	---	---	---
Control R^2 = .114 intercept=1.251	IQ	.011* (.005)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.111 (.073)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.050 (.123)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-.009 (.153)	---	---	---	---
	Other	.248 (.159)	---	---	---	---
MoExp R^2 = .140 intercept=-.661	IQ	.044* (.013)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.068 (.213)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.419 (.357)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	.026 (.443)	---	---	---	---
	Other	.070 (.459)	---	---	---	---
EdExp R^2 = .132 intercept=.132	IQ	.004 (.013)	-.013 (.014)	.006	.007	.004
	MoEd	-.110 (.198)	-.159 (.197)	-.028	.072	.005
	FaAbs	-.591+ (.332)	-.455 (.330)	-.069	-.032	-.034
	Surog	-.012 (.412)	.058 (.405)	-.066	-.006	.002
	Other	-.441 (.427)	-.552 (.424)	-.054	.160	.006
	GPA	.036 (.034)	---	---	---	---
	Control	.647* (.278)	---	---	---	---
	MoExp	.[illegible] (.038)	---	---	---	---

* coefficient significant at .05 level
+coefficient at least 1.75 times std. error

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Metric Regression Coefficients for All Model Equations
Standard Errors in Parentheses

DEPENDENT	PREDETERMINED	BLACK 12th GRADERS TOTAL	DIRECT	INDIRECT EFFECTS VIA: GPA	Control	MoExp
GPA R^2 = .254 intercept=68.893	IQ	.108* (.042)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.508 (.542)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-1.886 (1.129)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-3.736 (2.325)	---	---	---	---
	Other	-1.460 (1.272)	---	---	---	---
Control R^2 = .217 intercept=2.219	IQ	.007 (.006)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	.079 (.077)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.270 (.160)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-.634+ (.329)	---	---	---	---
	Other	-.358+ (.180)	---	---	---	---
MoExp R^2 = .342* intercept=5.596	IQ	-.007 (.014)	---	---	---	---
	MoEd	-.404* (.173)	---	---	---	---
	FaAbs	-.885* (.361)	---	---	---	---
	Surog	-2.427* (.744)	---	---	---	---
	Other	-.572 (.407)	---	---	---	---
EdExp R^2 = .469* intercept=.148	IQ	.011 (.013)	.009 (.014)	.001	.003	-.002
	MoEd	.238 (.166)	.312+ (.176)	.004	.032	-.109
	FaAbs	-1.016* (.347)	-.655+ (.368)	-.013	-.108	-.239
	Surog	-2.392* (.715)	-1.456+ (.789)	-.026	-.254	-.655
	Other	-1.258* (.391)	-.950* (.401)	-.010	-.144	-.154
	GPA	.007 (.045)	---	---	---	---
	Control	.401 (.321)	---	---	---	---
	MoExp	.270+ (.143)	---	---	---	---

* coefficient significant at .05 level
+ coefficient at least 1.75 times std. error

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